

So depe was hir wo bigonnen,
And eek hir herte in angre rennen,
A sorowful thing wel semed she.
Nor she hadde nothing slowe be
for to forcracchen al hir face,
And for to rende in many place
hir clothes, and for to tere hir swire,
As she that was fulfilled of ire;
And al to torn lay eek hir here
About hir shuldres, here and there,
As she that hadde it al torent
for angre and for maltalent.
And eek I telle you certeynly
How that she weep ful tenderly.
In world nis wight so hard of herte
That hadde seen hir sorowes smerte,
That nolde have had of hir pitee,
So wobigoon a thing was she.
She al todasshte herself for wo,
And smoot togider her handes two.
To sorwe was she ful ententyf,
That wolful reccheles caityf;
hir roughte litel of pleying,
Or of clipping or of kissing;
for whoso sorowful is in herte
him liste not to pleye ne sterte,
Nor for to daunsen, ne to singe,
Ne may his herte in temper bringe
To make joye on even or morowe;
for joye is contraire unto sorowe.
Elde was peynted after this,
That shorter was a foot, ywis,
Than she was wont in her yonghede.
Annethe herself she mighte fede;
So feble and eek so old was she
That faded was al hir beautee.
ful salowe was waxen hir colour,
hir heed forhoor was, whyt as flour.
Ywis, gret qualm ne were it noon,
Ne sinne, although hir lyf were gon.
Al woxen was hir body unwelde,
And drye, and dwyned al for elde.
A foul forwelked thing was she
That whylom round and softe had be.
hir eres shoken fast withalle,
As from her heed they wolde falle.
hir face frounced and forpyned,
And bothe hir bondes lorn, fordwyned.
So old she was that she ne wente
A foot, but it were by potente.
Tyme, that passeth night and day,
And resteles travayleth ay,
And steleth from us so prively,
That to us seemeth sikerly
That it in oon point dwelleth ever,
And certes, it ne resteth never,
But goth so faste, and passeth ay,
That ther nis man that thinke may
What tyme that now present is:
Asketh at these clerkes this;
for er men thinke it redily,
Three tymes been ypassed by.
The tyme, that may not sojourne,
But goth, and never may retourne,
246

Elde

Tyme

As water that doun renneth ay,
But never drope retourne may;
Ther may nothing as tyme endure,
Metal, nor erthely creature;
for alle thing it fret and shal:
The tyme eek, that chaungeth al,
And al doth waxe and fostred be,
And alle thing distroyeth he:
The tyme, that eldeth our auncessours
And eldeth kinges and emperours,
And that us alle shal overcomen
Er that deeth us shal have nomen:
The tyme, that hath al in welde
To elden folk, had maad hir elde
So inly, that, to my witing,
She mighte helpe herself nothing,
But turned ageyn unto childhede;
She had nothing herself to lede,
Ne wit ne pith inwith hir holde
More than a child of two year olde.
But natheles, I trowe that she
Was fair sumtyme, and fresh to see,
Whan she was in hir rightful age;
But she was past al that passage
And was a doted thing bicomem.
A furred cope on had she nomen;
Wel had she clad herself and warm,
for cold mighte elles doon hir harm.
These olde folk have alwey colde,
hir kinde is swiche, whan they ben olde.
ANOTHER thing was doon ther write,
That semede lyk an ipocrite,
And it was cleped Pope/holy,
That ilke is she that prively
Ne spareth never a wikked dede,
Whan men of hir taken non hede;
And maketh hir outward precious,
With pale visage and pitous,
And semeth a simple creature;
But ther nis no misaventure
That she ne thenketh in hir corage,
ful lyk to hir was that image,
That maketh was lyk hir semblaunce.
She was ful simple of countenaunce,
And she was clothed and eek shod,
As she were, for the love of God,
Yolden to religioun,
Swich semed hir devocioun.
A sauter held she faste in honde,
And bisily she gan to fonde
To make many a feynt prayere
To God, and to his seyntes dere.
Ne she was gay, fresh, ne jolyf,
But semed be ful ententyf
To gode werkes, and to faire,
And therto she had on an haire.
Ne certes, she was fat nothing,
But semed wery for fasting;
Of colour pale and deed was she,
from hir the gate shal werned be
Of paradys, that blisful place;
for swich folk maketh lene hir face,
As Crist seith in his evangyle,
To gete hem prys in toun a while:

And for a litel glorie veine
They lesen God and eek his reine.
Alderlast of everichoon,
Was peynted Povert al aloon,
That not a peny hadde in wolde,
Although that she hir clothes solde,
And though she shulde anhonged be;
for naked as a worm was she.
And if the weder stormy were,
for colde she shulde have deyed there.
She made on but a streit old sak,
And many a clout on it ther stak;
This was hir cote and hir mantel,
No more was there, never a del,
To clothe her with; I undertake,
Gret leyser hadde she to quake.
And she was put, that I of talke,
for fro these other, up in an balke;
There lurked and there coured she,
for powre thing, wherso it be,
Is shamfast, and despyed ay.
Hursed may wel be that day,
That powre man conceived is;
for God wot, al to selde, ywis,
Is any powre man wel fed,
Or wel arayed or yeled,
Or wel beloved, in swich wyse
In honour that he may aryse.
ALLE these thinges, wel avysed,
As I have you er this devysed,
With gold and asure over alle
Depeynted were upon the walle.
Squar was the wal, & high somdel;
Enclosed, and ybarred wel,
In stede of hegge, was that gardyn;
Com never shepherde therin.
Into that gardyn, wel ywrought,
Whoso that me coude have brought,
By laddre, or elles by degree,
It wolde wel have lyked me.
for swich solace, swich joye, and play,
I trowe that never man ne say,
As in that place delitous.
The gardyn was not daungerous
To herberwe briddes many oon.
So riche a yerd was never noon
Of briddes songe, and braunches grene.
Therin were briddes mo, I wene,
Than been in alle the rewme of fraunce.
ful blisful was the accordaunce
Of swete and pitous songe they made,
for al this world it oughte glade.
And I myself so mery ferde,
Whan I hir blisful songes herde,
That for an hundred pound nolde I,
If that the passage openly
hadde been unto me free
That I nolde entren for to see
Thassemblee, God kepe it fro care!
Of briddes, whiche therinne were,
That songen, through hir mery throtres,
Daunces of love, and mery notes.
Whan I thus herde foules singe,
I fel faste in a weymtinge,
r4

By which art, or by what engyn
I mighte come in that gardyn;
But way I couthe finde noon
Into that gardyn for to goon.
Ne nought wiste I if that ther were
Eyther hole or place o/where,
By which I mighte have entree;
Ne ther was noon to teche me;
for I was al aloon, ywis,
ful wo and anguissous of this.
Til atte laste bithoughte I me,
That by no weye ne mighte it be;
That ther nas laddre or wey to passe,
Or hole, into so fair a place.

HO gan I go a ful gret pas
Envyroning even in compas
The closing of the square wal,
Til that I fond a wiket smal
So shet, that I ne mighte in goon,
And other entree was ther noon.
THON this dore I gan to smyte,
That was so fetys and so lyte;
for other wey coude I not seke.
ful long I shoof, and knocked eke,
And stood ful long & oft herkning
If that I herde a wight coming;

Til that the dore of thilke entree
A mayden curteys opened me.
hir heer was as yelow of hewe
As any basin scoured newe.
hir flesh as tendre as is a chike,
With bente browes, smothe and slike;
And by mesure large were
The opening of hir yen clere.
hir nose of good proporcoun,
hir yen greye as a faucoun,
With swete breeth and wel savoured.
hir face whyt and wel coloured,
With litel mouth, and round to see;
A clove chin eek hadde she.
hir nekke was of good fasoun
In lengthe and gretnesse, by resoun,
Withoute bleyne, scabbe, or royne.
fro Jerusalem unto Burgoyne
Ther nis a fairer nekke, ywis,
To fele how smothe and softe it is.
hir throte, also whyt of hewe
As snow on braunche snowed newe.
Of body ful wel wrought was she
Men neded not, in no cuntree,
A fairer body for to seke.
And of fyn orfrays had she eke
A chapelet: so semly oon
Ne wered never mayde upon;
And faire above that chapelet
A rose gerland had she set.
She hadde in honde a gay mirour,
And with a riche gold tressour
hir heed was tressed queyntely;
hir sleeves sewed fetisly.
And for to kepe hir bondes faire
Of gloves whyte she hadde a paire.
And she hadde on a cote of grene
Of cloth of Gaunt; withouten wene,

The
Door

Ydel-
nesse